

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, June 15, 2015, for the purpose of meeting with the Greenbelt Homes Incorporated (GHI) Board of Directors.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:00 p.m. It was held in the GHI Board Room at 1 Hamilton Place.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Emmett V Jordan.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager and David E. Moran, Assistant City Manager.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Steve Skolnik, Susan Ready, Chuck Hess, Ed James, Diana McFadden, Bill Jones and Pat Novinski, GHI Board; Ben Fischler and Leeann Irwin, Audit Committee; Eldon Ralph, GHI General Manager; Kathleen Gallagher, News Review; Molly Lester, Bill Orleans and others.

Mayor Jordan welcomed everyone and there were introductions.

The Sage Policy Group Economic Strategy Report Recommendations and How They Could Affect GHI: Mayor Jordan indicated that the City's Economic Development planning was ongoing. He read the five recommendations from the report. Mr. Skolnik stated that GHI members value Roosevelt Center and asked about next steps to improve landlord-tenant relationships and fill vacant spaces there. Mayor Jordan responded that the theater had reopened. He indicated that City's options were limited. Mr. Roberts asked if anyone had ideas for new businesses at Roosevelt Center. Mr. Hess stated that he had heard Roosevelt Center tenants have difficulties with roof repairs and encouraged aggressive code enforcement by the City. Mayor Jordan responded that the City had taken enforcement action at Roosevelt Center.

Ms. McFadden indicated that landlords will do the minimal and favored a change in ownership possibly by a cooperative entity. Ms. Davis expressed concern that Greenbelt residents don't support the businesses in the City at places like Roosevelt and Greenway Centers. Ms. Pope also asked what kind of businesses GHI wanted to see at Roosevelt Center.

Ms. McFadden asked about the use of eminent domain to acquire Roosevelt Center. Ms. Ready expressed discomfort with the topic. Mr. McLaughlin believed cause was needed for eminent domain and in his opinion, cause wasn't there in this case. He noted that most of the spaces at Roosevelt Center had viable businesses. Mr. Roberts believed eminent domain should only be used for a public purpose.

Mr. Skolnik stated that a "Ben Franklin" type of store would do well in Roosevelt Center. An independent coffee shop type venue and a bicycle shop were also suggested.

Mr. Hess believed that if we don't want to bring additional traffic into Roosevelt Center, it won't be more than it is now.

Possibilities for Improving Communication among Greenbelt's Resident Stakeholders: Mr. Skolnik suggested there should be a forum for residential communities in Greenbelt to exchange information. Mayor Jordan thought it was a great idea and suggested maybe representatives of the management companies could get together. GHI agreed to try and convene some type of meeting.

Electric Vehicle Charging Station: Mr. Skolnik referenced the new charging station and expressed appreciation for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) process that allowed it to be installed. He indicated the Chandler's were interested in a dedication/opening of the charging station. Mr. Skolnik asked about encouraging charging stations at commercial properties in Greenbelt. Shopping centers, hotels and office parks were mentioned as possible locations. Ms. Davis responded that the City had been working on this. Ms. Novinski noted that she lived nearby the new station and had not experienced any problems with it.

Repair of Verizon Boxes: Mr. Skolnik stated that Comcast and Verizon never remove old wiring or equipment from GHI units. Mr. James believed that the City had some leverage with Comcast. Mr. McLaughlin requested a specific list of problem locations. Mr. Skolnik agreed to provide an inventory.

Replacement of Pepco Double Poles; Trimming of Trees by Pepco: Mr. McLaughlin noted there was legislation introduced but not passed during the past General Assembly Session dealing with both issues. Ms. Davis noted that Comcast Verizon often don't move their equipment from the old pole, preventing its removal. Mr. McLaughlin stated that Pepco had provided plans for tree work on City right-of-way on Friday. GHI reported receiving a notice from Pepco earlier in the day. Mr. Roberts hoped GHI would tell Pepco no, they could not cut down the trees. Mr. Hess wanted to tell Pepco they could not cut/trim trees until they finish removing the double poles from the last tree trimming.

Playgrounds: GHI expressed concerned that the City isn't doing enough maintenance on engineered wood fiber playgrounds. Ms. Davis noted the City had added an additional full-time position in the FY 2016 Budget to help with playground maintenance. There was discussion about removing shredded rubber surfacing from playgrounds.

Repair of Comcast Cable Boxes: This item had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

No Cost Spay-Nueter Program: Mr. McLaughlin stated that there were plenty of funds left in this grant program. GHI agreed to help promote the program and notify their Companion Animal Committee.

Resolution of Significant Right-of-Way Issues: Mr. Ralph stated the most egregious ones were at five sites. He indicated there were 135 minor sites. Mr. Ralph stated that GHI had been working with Terri Hruby and that these five were on the next GHI Board agenda and then the matter would come to the City Council. Ms. Ready hoped the other 135 sites could be handled with a MOU between the City and GHI.

Proposed City/GHI Partnership re: Pilot Project on Hoarding: It was announced the Community Foundation had not received the grant application submitted jointly by the City and GHI. It was agreed to resubmit the application for FY 2017.

Status of GHI's Homes Improvement Project (HIP): Mr. Skolnik summarized HIP as having three pieces. One was a crawl space improvement project. The second was a menu of optional items such as ductless HVAC systems that would be offered to members for a fee and this would be a five year endeavor. The third piece would come from GHI replacement reserves program which would replace doors and windows, as well as the vinyl siding on the frame homes. Mr. Skolnik noted the membership had authorized loans if needed for these items. HIP work would not begin until 2016.

Number of rentals, and vacant GHI homes; re-sale trends: Mr. Skolnik reported 17 rentals, 17 vacant units and 58 units on the market. In 2014, there were 89 units sold, which was the highest number since 2007.

WSSC Issue: Mr. Ralph indicated that GHI was ready to negotiate a mutually beneficial arrangement for both parties and awaiting a response/willingness from WSSC.

Overpasses and Underpasses: Ms. McFadden suggested more overpasses were needed to cross major roads in Greenbelt. Mayor Jordan and others responded that overpasses are very expensive.

Disabled Resident Access during Capital Projects: Ms. Davis suggested that some residents with disabilities have trouble navigating temporary/unstable walkways during capital projects. She noted this was a problem in Greenbriar as well. Mr. Skolnik noted that GHI had recently become aware of a particular problem and was addressing it.

Greenbelt Station South Core & FBI: Mayor Jordan announced that construction of townhouses and an upscale apartment complex was moving forward at Greenbelt Station South Core. He noted the GSA process was also underway and the City was cautiously optimistic about its chances of getting the new FBI Headquarters.

The meeting ended at 10:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David E. Moran
Assistant City Manager